DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 052 EC 302 508

AUTHOR Smarte, Lynn
TITLE ERIC Basics: How To Use ERIC To Search Your Special Education Topic. ERIC Digest E523.
INSTITUTION Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Va.; ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, Reston, VA.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-EC-93-6
PUB DATE Oct 93
CONTRACT RR93002005
NOTE 3p.; For a supplementary worksheet, see EC 302 509.
AVAILABLE FROM Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091 ($1 each, minimum order $5 prepaid).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Databases; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; Higher Education; Information Retrieval; Information Sources; *Online Searching; Preschool Education; Search Strategies
IDENTIFIERS *ERIC; ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

This digest offers tips for both new and experienced users of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database. It describes ERIC as a federally funded, nationwide information network providing access to papers, curriculum and teaching guides, conference proceedings, literature reviews, curricular materials, and journal articles in the field of education. It notes that over 60,000 documents and journal articles in ERIC relate to the education of exceptional children. The digest explains how to determine the best way to access ERIC, states the importance of using the "Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors" to identify subject terms, reviews the use of Boolean logic for expanding or limiting the database search, and points out that the 16 ERIC clearinghouses have information specialists to provide assistance. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education is noted as having the primary responsibility for collecting and disseminating information on special education. A supplement to the digest, titled "ERIC Basics: Search Planning Worksheet and List of ERIC Clearinghouses" is also available. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
THE COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
1920 Association Drive • Reston, VA 22091-1589
(703) 264-9474 • FAX (703) 264-9494

ERIC Digest

October 1993 **EDO-EC-93-6**

E523

ED 363 052

ERIC Basics: How To Use ERIC To Search Your Special Education Topic

Lynn Smarte

Have you heard of ERIC but never used it? Have you used ERIC but wondered if you found everything on your topic? Here are some tips for new and experienced ERIC users that will help you get the most out of the world's largest education database.

What is ERIC?

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a federally-funded, nationwide information network designed to provide users with ready access to education literature. Papers, curriculum and teaching guides, conference proceedings, literature reviews, and curricular materials, along with articles from nearly 800 education-related journals, are indexed and abstracted for entry into the ERIC database.

Although the ERIC system consists of many clearinghouses and other network components at various locations around the United States, it is important to remember that there is only one ERIC database. Whether you access ERIC through a public library, college library, home or office, or other information center, you are searching the same database of educational information.

ERIC and Special Education

Currently, over 60,000 documents and journal articles in ERIC relate to the education of exceptional children. Most of these are processed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

What will you get from an ERIC search?

The result of the search will be an annotated bibliography of journal and document literature on your topic. After you have received and screened your search, you can readily obtain the full text of most of the materials. Microfiche or paper copies of materials are available from many ERIC service providers or from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Journal articles can be found in many libraries or reprints can be ordered from article reprint services.

Find the best way for you to access ERIC.

You can now use ERIC at university libraries, many public and professional libraries, and perhaps your closest personal computer. Computer networks and services like the Internet, SpecialNet, OCLC's First Search, and GTE Education Services are providing users with direct access to ERIC. Before you decide where to search ERIC, ask these questions:

1. How much will it cost?

You may have free or inexpensive access to ERIC. If not, you may have to pay for connect time on some computer systems or order a search through a search service.

2. How much of the ERIC database is available?

Some services provide access to only the most recent five or ten years of ERIC, which may be all you need. Decide whether you want to limit your search by date; remember that the database was started in 1966.

3. How long will it take?

Turnaround time can vary greatly, from a few minutes if you have direct access to ERIC on a personal computer, to several days or longer if you have to order a search that someone else will run for you.

4. How much flexibility does the search system offer?

Many different software systems are used to search ERIC. Some menu-driven search systems make it easy for a first-time user, but limit your opportunities to make changes to your search question. If you try searching ERIC and feel you cannot locate exactly what you are looking for, ask your librarian for help or call an ERIC clearinghouse.

For help in locating access to ERIC, call ACCESS ERIC at 1/800-LET-ERIC (1/800-538-3742).

Use *The Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors.*

Every one of the over 800,000 articles and documents in the ERIC database has been given subject indexing terms called descriptors. Before you run an ERIC search, it is important to take a few minutes to find the ERIC descriptors that best capture your topic.

For example, articles and documents about regular class placement are indexed under the descriptor ***mainstreaming***. If you want resources about developing children's social skills, the best descriptor is ***interpersonal competence.***

If you are using ERIC at a library, ask for a copy of *The Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*. If you cannot locate a Thesaurus, call the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education (703/264-9474) for help with your strategy. (Note: If you are searching a relatively new concept for which there is no descriptor, "free text" searching is available on most systems. Free text searching means you can look for the word or concept anywhere in the record.)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EC 303508

Know your ANDs and ORs.

Although the software used to search ERIC will depend on which system you use, all searching is based on Boolean logic. The computer creates sets of information based on the way you tell it to combine subject terms (descriptors).

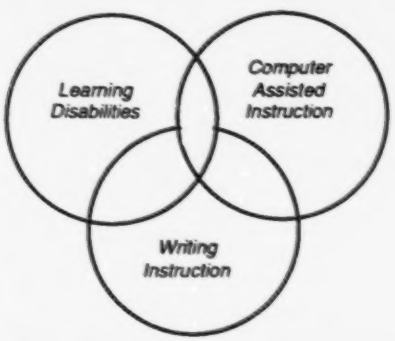
For example, if you wanted ideas on how computers can be used to improve the writing skills of students with learning disabilities, you could use the *Thesaurus* to find these subject descriptors:

learning disabilities
computer assisted instruction
writing instruction

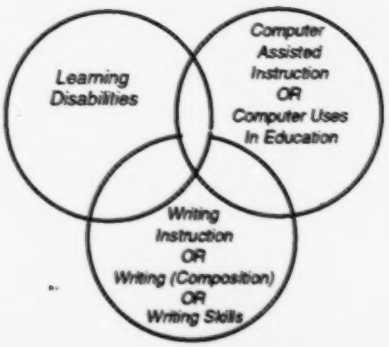
To search ERIC for records that are indexed under all three of your concepts, you would combine these descriptors with **ANDs**:

learning disabilities **AND** *computer assisted instruction* **AND** *writing instruction*

A Boolean diagram of your search might look like this:



If you wanted to expand your search to find additional relevant materials on this topic, you could add descriptors to your writing and computer sets using the **OR** operator:


Learning Disabilities
Computer Assisted Instruction OR Computer Uses In Education
Writing Instruction OR Writing (Composition) OR Writing Skills

REMEMBER:

ORs —Expand or add more to your search.
ANDs—Limit and help focus your search.

Use the ERIC Clearinghouses.

All of the ERIC clearinghouses have information specialists who can help you plan the best strategy for searching your topic. When you call or write to a clearinghouse, ask about special clearinghouse publications on your topic. Clearinghouses produce free and inexpensive publications, such as Digests and brief bibliographies, as well as more extensive products.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, located at The Council for Exceptional Children, has the primary responsibility for collecting and disseminating information on special education. For a list of current products from this clearinghouse, or for help with your search strategy, call 703/264-9474.

For more information on using ERIC to locate information on disabilities and gifted education, you can order a copy of:

How to Find Answers to Your Special Education Questions
by Lynn Smarte and Kathleen McLane
Publication Number R637, 1992
ED351835

This 70-page, user-friendly guide for students, researchers, librarians, and other professional searchers includes basic information on how and where to access ERIC, a step-by-step guide to planning search strategies, three sample searches and tips on other ERIC searchable features such as publication types and identifiers. Appendices include a list of all ERIC descriptors for disabilities and giftedness and lists of other databases and organizations concerned with special education.

Order from:
Publications Sales
The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091-1589
703/620-3660

Note. A supplement to this digest, *ERIC Basics: Search Planning Worksheet and List of ERIC Clearinghouses*, is available from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education (Stock No. E523.1).

ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RR93002005. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.